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SUBJECT: UNIFEM SUPPORTS TOWARDS MORE UAE WOMEN POLITICAL  
PARTICIPATION

¶1. On June 13, Sheikha Fatima, widow of the late President Sheikh Zayed, honored 220 women graduates of the "Enhancing the Role of Women Parliamentarians" program, which was organized in 2005 by the General Women's Union in conjunction with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The women graduates were a mixture of young and old, experienced both the private and public sectors. The nine women members of the UAE's Federal National Council were among the graduates of the program, which was designed to prepare UAE women to seek a more active role in the political life of the country.

¶2. Public policies need to emphasize the value of gender participation in all areas of the society, concluded a study released during the graduation ceremony by Dr. Mariam Lootah, Political Science professor at the UAE National University. Lootah compared UAE women's contributions before and after the federation. Her study suggests that newly acquired wealth has turned both men and women UAE citizens away from involvement in politics and the development of public policies. Lootah concluded her study by offering recommendations for increasing women's political participation. These recommendations include: encouraging societal leaders to include women in the decision-making process, so that they become active members in their society; correcting misinterpretations of the role of women according to Islam; amending the constitution and judicial laws to allow more societal participation for women; increasing freedom of expression; and creating more political awareness programs for women.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: The study is the first of its kind to clearly reflect the reasons behind the limited political role of women. Lootah has squarely placed responsibility on the UAE's political leadership to raise the status of women citizens in the country and received the applause of "Mother of the Nation" Sheikha Fatima in doing so. End Comment.

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